

## Give your opinion on sales tax issue

If there's one thing people care about, it's their money.

They care how much they make, they care how much they save and they care about how much of it they have to spend.

And, if the past few years have told us anything, people aren't happy when they're told they'll have to spend it on taxes.

Lake County commissioners waded into those waters last week with the announcement that they'll host two public meetings to hear opinions on the possibility of an increase in the county's sales tax.

The sales tax rate currently is 6.25 percent. Commissioners are deciding whether to raise the sales tax 0.25 percent, 0.5 percent, or not at all. State law allows commissioners to raise it up to 1.5 percent.

A raise of 0.25 percent would mean an extra \$7 million per year for the county, which has seen its budget drop \$6.17 million over the past two years.

There are two choices if the commissioners decide an increase is indeed necessary:

- A unanimous vote of the three commissioners would pass the hike as an emergency measure.

- A 2-1 commissioners vote would put the issue on a countywide ballot for voters to decide.

The public hearings will play a key role in the board's decision on which step to take.

We urge area residents to take part in the process — by any means necessary.

The public hearings are set at 2 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m. Jan. 17 in commissioners chambers on the fourth floor of the county administration building at 105 Main St., Painesville.

It's a shame neither of the meetings will take place in the evening. Commissioner Daniel P. Troy said, based on commissioners' experience with hearings such in 2002 dealing with a sewer rate hike, that night meetings don't garner much attendance.

Too bad they didn't give their constituents a chance in these trying economic times. Perhaps an issue that hits squarely in every single county resident's pocket would have brought more bodies to the meeting room.

But we'll never know.

So, area residents have two other choices:

- Submit written comments by writing to Lake County Commissioners, 105 Main St., Painesville OH 44077.

- Calling commissioners at 800-899-LAKE, ext. 2745.

It's vital that your opinions are heard. Don't miss the chance to share them with those who will be making this key decision.